



## **Ward Committees, CPFs, SGBs, IDPs, LED**

The Communist University course on “Induction” is one of the most voluminous to date by the number of texts used, and in this item today there are four, which come on top of the three texts already used in this 9th part of the course.

In part 7 we have already looked at the problematic question of the Communes and the Communal Councils of Venezuela, asking, in effect, who exercises agency in such structures? Is it the people who are co-opted into them? Or is it the government department “of the People’s Power” that co-opts them, and funds them, that calls the shots?

We then looked at the specifically South African mass democratic organisations, the ANC, the Leagues, COSATU, SANCO, the YCL and others, and in the following Part 8 we introduced the South African “Local State” and the mechanisms of voting for the state democracy, organised by the Demarcations Board and by the Independent Electoral Commission (the IEC).

In this part, so far, we have looked at the Party (SACP) and the Liberation Movement (ANC) as components of an alliance and of a broader local network, held together by the cadres of the SACP and the ANC. Both SACP and ANC express such a vision, in the documents we shared.

## **Minister of the People's Power**

Now we return to the problematic that was set out in the first item of Part 7, in connection with the interview of Reinaldo Iturriza, Venezuelan Minister of the People's Power for the Communes and Social Protection. But this time we look at it in terms of South Africa, and South African politicians and intellectuals. We begin with Professor Steven Friedman, who wrote, among other things in the attached article (see attached), prior to the 2011 municipal elections, the following:

*“... [Ward] committees were established to enable ward councillors to discover what local voters want. They have never done that... they remain part of the problem, because committees chosen by politicians or small groups will never give grassroots citizens a voice... there is only one way of asking everyone in a ward which candidate they want - it is called an election.”* (Business Day, 4 May 2011)

Friedman was responding to a radio discussion featuring the then Deputy Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Yunus Carrim, who, Friedman said, “made it clear he understands the problem”, but who was nevertheless determined to persist with the ward committees.

We, too, can see that Carrim understands the problem, from the lecture that Carrim gave the following day (5 May 2011). It is the second attached document. It concludes with a section headed ‘Towards a Dialectic of “Invited” and “Invented” Spaces’ (see page 19 of the booklet). Yunus Carrim in this section is reacting to a publication of the NGO-sponsored “GGLN”, which, in 135 pages of ostensible examination of the “community voice”, treats “party-political” voting democracy as an alien intrusion. “Vote” is just another word for “voice”, by the way, but the GGLN is not concerned about that. For them, the second guess is always better.

The GGLN document sets up an argument between “invitation” (i.e. co-option) and “invention” (i.e. agency) that is an echo of John Turner’s question, “[Who Decides?](#)” Carrim suggests being “dialectical”, not so as to resolve the contradiction, or go forward with it, but only to evade it. He says that dialectical means complementary. It’s a pity that our comrade would want to sacrifice such a profound concept for the sake of making such a small gain, over so trivial an opposition.

Actually, Yunus Carrim, in this moment at least, was more similar to the NGOs of the GGLN than Friedman was, because Friedman is committed to democratic elections. Friedman is not behaving, like the “GGLN” is, as if 1994 means nothing, and as if the vote is now something contemptible, to be second-guessed by all possible means.

Yunus Carrim says he understands that 1994 was a product of

mass popular agency, but that for him it could just as well mean that the “invited” space of co-option, such as ward committees, was the fitting outcome of the liberation struggle. See if you can follow his argument.

A week later, Yunus Carrim responded to Friedman’s article, but only managed to dig himself deeper into the hole he was digging before (see the third attached document).

## **Minister’s Power**

Carrim kept pressing on after that, and he did manage, as he indicated he would in this May, 2011 article (*“The ANC’s 2012 Conference will provide guidelines on improving ward committees and other forms of community participation”*) to get an endorsement of ward committees inserted into the ANC resolution on Legislature and Governance passed at the 53<sup>rd</sup> ANC National Conference in Mangaung, in December 2012 (fourth attachment).

There it remains. As political and mass democratic organisations, locally, we have to live with this incubus, this cuckoo in the nest, called the ward committee. It takes away our cadres, and it creates a track of decision-making that is beyond the reach and out of sight of the voter, and of the mass organisations.

What about Community-Police Forums (CPFs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and Integrated Development Plans (IDPs)? What about “Local Economic Development” (LED)? The

Party should try to know what all of these bodies are doing, and what the Ward Committee is doing.

What is dangerous to political life is the removal of any part of it to a secluded area where it is no longer part of the common polity. It is not the fact that these actors are in the field that is wrong. But if they do their business in secret, over the heads of the common people, that is wrong. That is one thing that makes people very angry.

“Nothing about us without us” is a good slogan, with South African characteristics.

The Party in the localities must be an agent of transparency, including with its own activities. Trust the people; “The masses can never be wrong,” said Oliver Reginald Tambo, meaning that if we are standing outside the people, accusing them, then right as we may think ourselves to be, but we are out of the game.

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- The above is to introduce the original reading-text compilation, **[Friedman, Carrim, 2011; ANC 53rd Conference, 2012](#)**
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files **[please click here](#)**.